



Alexandria Police Department

Directive 6.2



Body Armor

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6.2.01 POLICY/PURPOSE

The Department makes every attempt to provide equipment designed to enhance officer safety. In the course of their professional duties, police officers are exposed to a risk of assault by firearms, particularly handguns (including their own). One of the most effective safeguards available against such threats is the use of body armor. While body armor provides a significant level of protection, it is not an absolute protection against all threat levels, and is not a substitute for following sound officer safety tactics and practices. It is the policy of the Department to enhance the physical safety of officers through the use of body armor in conjunction with established safety procedures.

Officers shall wear only agency approved body armor. Officer safety is of paramount importance. The wearing of body armor includes the entire vest and it shall be worn in conformance to the guidelines issued by the manufacturer. It shall be the duty of all immediate supervisors to insure that all officers required to wear body armor do so.

The purpose of this directive is to establish departmental policy on the use and care of body armor.

6.2.02 DEFINITIONS

The following definitions are for the limited purposes of this directive and may not apply in all other cases:

1. Body Armor: bullet resistant material designed for daily wear in a concealable vest carrier under the uniform shirt or outer clothing, or worn in an external carrier, and which has been issued or approved for use by the Department.
2. Tactical Body Armor: body armor offering a higher level of threat protection and which is issued to members of specialized units for use in high risk or tactical operations.
3. External Vest Carrier: a non-concealable carrier for the bullet resistant panels of the body armor, designed to be worn on the outside of clothing.

6.2.03 PROCEDURES**A. ISSUANCE OF BODY ARMOR**

1. Every sworn officer of the Department is issued body armor that complies with standards established by the National Institute of Justice (NIJ). All issued body armor shall conform to the level of threat protection required to defeat the issued handgun ammunition fired from the duty weapon. **[41.3.5]**
2. Body armor and carriers that are worn or damaged through normal wear or use shall be replaced or repaired by the agency. It is the responsibility of the officer to report any damage or wear of the ballistic panels or carrier to the appropriate supervisor. Do not make alterations or repairs.
3. The Department follows a “rational replacement policy” in the replacement of body armor. Generally, body armor is replaced approximately every five (5) years and/or when necessitated by wear, use or damage. Any time body armor is legitimately damaged in the line of duty it will be replaced by the Department, as soon as practical.
4. Any unit of body armor that has been fired upon, punctured, stabbed, cut, or otherwise structurally damaged from a threat shall be immediately removed from service and replaced.
5. Requests to wear personally owned body armor must be submitted to the Chief of Police through the chain of command for approval. Approval will only be considered if the requested body armor meets or exceeds the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) specifications of the currently issued department body armor.

6. External vest carriers are approved for all sworn officers at the rank of sergeant and below.

B. WEARING OF BODY ARMOR

1. Unless exempted by policy or waiver from the police chief, body armor wear is mandatory for:

- (a) All sworn officers in the Patrol Operations Bureau, all officers wearing a uniform while working in supportive functions such as Crime Scene Investigators, Hack Inspectors, SPOs and all officers engaged in pre-planned, high-risk situations, as in (f) below.
- (b) Investigators, Commanders, and all sworn officers when they are wearing the uniform and assigned to temporary support duties, i.e., special events and ICS incidents.
- (c) Officers engaged in secondary employment assignments where law enforcement activity is anticipated, and other activities that are not specifically listed in the “exceptions area” below.
- (d) Officers while attending court in uniform.
- (e) All officers, regardless of assignment or rank, when participating in live fire training exercises. The exact guidelines for this will be set by the Range Manager.
- (f) All officers engaged in pre-planned high-risk situations such as:
 1. Arrest or search warrant execution.
 2. At Incident Command System locations.
 3. Civil disturbances.
 4. When it is known ballistic shields will be utilized.
 5. Any situation deemed appropriate by any on-scene supervisor.

(g) Issued winter coats and rain gear are to be worn over the external carrier. The issued fleece jacket may be worn either over or under the external carrier.

(h) No more than five (5) approved/departments issued pouches will be worn with the external carrier.

(i) The issued metal badge will be worn with the external carrier unless otherwise approved by the Chief of Police.

2. Sergeants and below have the option of wearing the concealable or external vest carrier.
3. Except as specified in section (f) above, the routine wearing of body armor while on duty is not required under the following conditions:
 - (a) When the officer is working in an authorized covert capacity that may be compromised by the wearing of body armor; or
 - (b) When the officer is working an authorized special assignment (or training) where the wearing of body armor is not appropriate or necessary as determined by the respective Bureau Commander; or
 - (c) When the officer is assigned to perform an administrative function with little likelihood of responding to incidents which present a threat; or
 - (d) As otherwise deemed appropriate by the Chief of Police.
4. Officers who are exempted from the routine wearing of body armor under one of the above defined exemptions must carefully weigh the risks and ensure that their issued armor is readily accessible while on duty (normally in the officer's assigned vehicle).
5. Commanders at the rank of lieutenant or above may require the wearing of body armor for any sworn officers working in an assignment where, in their opinion, the assignment carries with it a significant threat that would warrant the wearing of body armor.

C. TACTICAL BODY ARMOR

1. Tactical body armor is issued to members of the Special Operations Team and other specialized units in order to provide them with higher levels of threat protection during high-risk tactical operations. Prior to purchase, other specialized units, i.e., Vice/Narcotics or K-9, will consult with the SOT Commander to determine an appropriate selection.
2. The SOT Commander and Team Leaders shall be responsible for determining the tactical body armor requirements of the SOT and for ensuring that assigned personnel are properly trained in its use and maintenance.

D. INSPECTIONS OF BODY ARMOR

1. As part of the annual equipment line inspection, all supervisors will examine each sworn officer's body armor. The inspection will include an assessment of fit, cleanliness, and signs of damage, abuse, or need for repair or replacement.

2. The SOT Commander and SOT Team Leaders shall be jointly responsible for conducting regular periodic inspections of tactical body armor issued to SOT personnel.

E. MAINTENANCE & DISPOSAL OF BODY ARMOR

1. Each officer is responsible for the proper care and maintenance of body armor in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. This includes regular inspection of the armor for signs of damage and general cleanliness.
2. Any loss or theft of departmental body armor shall immediately be reported in writing to the appropriate supervisor.
3. Surplus body armor shall be disposed of by recycling to a manufacturer or donation to other agencies for legitimate purposes, or destroyed. The Property Supervisor must approve any disposal of departmental body armor.

6.2.04 TRAINING & EVALUATION
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A. The Support Services Commander (or designee) will be responsible for:

1. Maintaining information on advances in the body armor or NIJ specifications that may indicate a need to upgrade or replace body armor.
2. Maintaining documentation verifying that our body armor conforms with current NIJ specifications as well as information on occurrences where issued body armor has protected or failed to protect officers in accordance with its rated threat protection level.

B. The Property Supervisor will maintain:

1. Procurement records, armor identification, and issuance data enabling the Department to track the age of the units and effect the programmed scheduled replacement of used body armor once the manufacturer's warranty on the ballistic panels has expired.

By Authority Of:

Earl L. Cook
Chief of Police